

Meeting Highlights | January 25, 2007

Sonoma Valley Groundwater Management Plan Basin Advisory Panel

Meeting Overview

- The Panel discussed monitoring program elements and identified issues for consideration in developing a monitoring program in the Sonoma Valley. A sub-committee will meet in February and March to develop a draft proposal for Panel discussion on March 22. For more information on subcommittee meetings, contact Gina Bartlett (gina.bartlett@gmail.com or 415.255.6805).
- Project manager Bill Keene will be on paternity leave from Feb 3 through late March. He will plan to attend the March 22 Panel meeting.

Next Meeting

2:00-5:30, March 22, 2007, Sonoma Community Center

Subcommittee Meetings on Monitoring (location to be announced)

- Thursday, 2/15, 10-Noon
- Thursday, 3/1, 10-Noon
- Monday, 3/12, 1:00-3:00

Data Collection and Monitoring Program Issues

As part of developing the groundwater management plan, the Panel must contemplate how to incorporate monitoring. Monitoring is critical to understand the health of the basin, including quantity and quality, and measuring to see if basin management objectives are being met. Also, monitoring enhances funding opportunities to implement projects in the region. Currently, an estimated 1800 wells are in the Sonoma Valley. DWR monitors 18 wells, and the USGS report documents 40 other monitoring wells, many of which are monitored by Panel member Ed Nelson on a voluntary basis. In the Valley, water levels, rather than water quality, are most typically monitored. Monitoring water quality needs to be expanded.

Consultant Tim Parker outlined the necessary steps to develop a monitoring program. A subcommittee will develop a proposal for the monitoring program and data collection protocols, which the full Panel will discuss at its March meeting.

Steps to develop a Monitoring Program

- 1) Inventory existing data
- 2) Determine how to "house" data
- 3) Work with existing monitoring wells
- 4) Identify other areas that need to be monitored
- 5) Identify funding for monitoring

Issues and Concerns for Consideration

- Levels and water quality
- Well data is considered proprietary information related to property rights
- Monitoring is often linked to limiting use
- A perception exists that any kind of monitoring will lead to meters
- Burden of reporting on ag and others currently which may lead to resistance
- Engage large users, such as industrial users.
- Community outreach to support volunteer monitoring
- Voluntary residential well owners who would participate
- How to fund monitoring
- Target areas with alluvial fans
- Will the focus be valley-wide or specific areas
- Include / use data collected from municipal wells
- Tasting rooms are often on wells and have regular quality testing that is required. Consider using data. PRMD has data. DHS also does annual quality tests.
- Consider using labs to do voluntary water quality tests
- Salinity
- Geological data collection
- Who will analyze data collected (SCWA and USGS)
- Water typing
- Personal health / pharmacological products as it affects quality
- Inexpensive modifications to existing well could make data from them more useful

Possible Policy Recommendations

- Technical difficulty of accessing and measuring wells: tubes could be required in all new wells.
- Zoning can be put in to limit wells in response to a concern that landowners who already have service through some entity put wells in to supplement use

Kathy Pons on Valley of the Moon Alliance and Residential Well Owners

As part of the ongoing learning series, member Kathy Pons discussed residential wells in the northern end of the Valley. Groundwater is the sole source of water in the area primarily for household and landscaping uses. Most homes have conservation measures in place (low flow toilets, etc.). Monitoring occurs on 10-15 wells in the area. Residents are concerned about potential groundwater contamination from pesticides, fertilizers and recycled water constituent accumulations. Members are more open to measuring groundwater levels than to meters.

Potential Recommendation for the Panel

Education related to pump tests for new wells. Although PRMD requires pump tests to include adjacent properties, neighbors don't also want to participate.

Ed Nelson on Monitoring Residential Wells

Member Ed Nelson measures approximately 31 wells annually as a volunteer for the Valley of the Moon Water District and out of personal interest. Of the 31 wells, he said that 9 have experienced problems. These wells are near Wyatt Road, Fowler Creek Road, and Carriger Road.

Potential Recommendation

Require monitoring tubes in wells to overcome difficulties in measuring.

PRMD Pete Parkinson on Water Element and Monitoring in the General Plan

The water resources element of the County General Plan is a first in California. The Planning Commission is currently reviewing and modifying recommendations related to new wells. The water resources element will require collecting information on an as needed basis, including monitoring in areas where the information is most needed. The public hearing on the general plan will take place this summer.

Follow Up on Technical Issues

In early meetings, Panel members identified additional technical issues that members would like to address in the planning process. Many of these are complex, difficult topics. Staff recommended that they be addressed in the following ways.

Issue: Breaking down water demand

Follow-Up: discuss as part of the USGS model in April

Discussion: The existing model uses data through 2000. Water data is available beyond 2000; however, land use data critical to understanding the demand side of the equation does not go beyond 2000. The Panel may also want to consider breaking down the model into detailed areas to better understand demand. The USGS model is simplified to look at the Valley as a whole.

Issue: Potential for well contamination by seawater

Follow-Up: Address in monitoring program and with the USGS model

Issue: Identifying recharge areas

Follow-Up: Working with DWR to address this issue

Related Effort: Lisa Micheli, Sonoma Ecology Center, is working on a flood control project on the Sonoma Creek which may be appropriate to integrate with recharge issues.

Issue: Interaction between ground and surface water

Follow-Up: Speaker invited in April

Thursday Meetings in 2007

In response to community interest, the Basin Advisory Panel will meet periodically in the evening. Currently, meeting times are set for 2:00-5:00 pm. The Panel will set evening dates / times in the near future.

March 22

April 26

May 31

June 28

July 26

September 27

Oct 25

Nov 29